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AUTHOR	Spangle, Michael; Hodne, Geralee; Schierling, Don
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ABSTRACT

To understand whether student satisfaction in online courses at Regis University (a Jesuit university located in Denver, Colorado) included the values priority of the university, a study examined student evaluation forms. Based on analysis of more than 1,200 student evaluations drawn from 118 online and 73 classroom-based courses, five of six university values achieved near equal, equal or greater levels of satisfactions in the online environment when compared to the classroom-based courses. Additionally, 28 online instructors provide insights about how to incorporate values such as leadership, problem solving, critical thinking, communication, social and ethical responsibility, and respect for diversity in online learning. Instructors identified several factors, which they believe contribute to the delivery of high-quality online courses, including strong communication skills, commitment to value learning, and strategic design of courses to include activities that promote discussion of values. Contains 16 references and 3 tables of data. (Author/RS)

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Approaching value-centered education through the eyes of an electronic generation: Strategies for distance learning

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Paper Abstract

Based on analysis of more than 1200 student evaluations drawn from 118 online and 73 classroom-based courses, five of six university values achieved near equal, equal or greater levels of satisfactions in the online environment when compared to the classroom-based courses. Additionally, 28 online instructors provide insights about how to incorporate values such as leadership, problem solving, critical thinking, communication, social and ethical responsibility, and respect for diversity in online learning.

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Regis University
3333 Regis Boulevard, L-12
Denver, CO 80221-1099
Phone: (303) 458-4963
(303) 458-4939
Fax: (303) 964-5539

Michael Spangle, mspangle@regis.edu
Geralee Hodne, ghodne@regis.edu
Don Schierling, ddshierling@attbi.com

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Approaching values-centered education through the eyes of an electronic generation: Strategies for distance learning

How students learn can be as important as what students learn. In elementary and secondary schools, the goals are often to facilitate the development of skills that will be useful for life as adults. In many colleges, course content prepares students for professional careers. Preparing these students involves the facilitation of core skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, communication or decision-making. How students reflect upon their experience and learn new information in school often influences how they approach their personal and work environments as adults.

For many people educated during the 1950 through the 80s, the delivery of course content paralleled what students would expect in adult life, that is, a great deal of face-to-face and voice interaction. Face-to-face learning is no less important in the twenty-first century, but it has been joined by computer-mediated learning. In some communities, the introduction of e-high schools provides new opportunities for students to take courses entirely through distance delivery.

Electronic-based courses provide concepts and concerns that many adults will encounter in their professional careers. Some professionals tend to spend more time "talking" to clients and staff by the way of their computers than by more traditional formats. Some staffs are dispersed across many states or countries, so projects are coordinated through e-mail, teleconferencing, and video conferencing. Group and team communication occur in different ways than what professionals were used to experiencing during the twentieth century.

Education has shifted as the learning styles and professional needs of students have shifted. Online, distance education courses are growing in appeal on many college campuses. Some courses that we couldn't imagine offered through distance delivery appear to be working,

despite the doubts of many educators. Courses such as interpersonal communication, public speaking, spirituality, intercultural communication, and ethics are taught in a format different than instructors have been traditionally used to, and different from the methods or delivery platforms they were exposed to as students.

Some students are more comfortable in electronic format than they are in a traditional classroom. Young students are learning differently than their teachers learned in past decades. Many elementary school children are as proficient or more on computers than many college instructors. The challenge for colleges in the twenty-first century is to adapt to the changing learning styles and prepare students for life in a world that's very much different from the one in which instructors learned. This task can become especially difficult for instructors who learned values such as ethical behavior and social responsibility through face-to-face interaction or the modeling of classroom teachers. It's difficult to imagine value-education in any other way. But students do envision other ways of learning and distance education is one of these. Smith and Dillon (1999) point out, "Whenever a new 'hard' technology becomes practical for education applications, educators and decision-makers question the effectiveness of that technology as compared to the status quo" (p. 6).

Students brought up in an electronic generation are becoming accustomed to learning through graphics, electronic text, chat rooms, and forums where virtual community replaces physical community. Relationships grounded in pixels on a screen replace interpersonal relationships built on sight, smell, and touch. Debate will continue for many years about whether online, distance education can teach critical thinking or communication as effectively as classroom education, nevertheless, students will still be drawn to the online environment.

Instructors will need to continue finding ways to teach fundamental skills necessary for life in twenty-first century electronic community.

Barker (2000) points out that for many years, colleges understood distance learning as "the delivery of live instruction from one site to another, or to multiple sites, using audio or video technologies that allow the teacher and students at different sites to interact with each other" (p. 88). Opitz (1996) expands this definition: "It is the use of electronic telecommunications equipment such as cable transmissions, fiber optics, satellites, and telephones to send instructional programming to learners" (p. 325). In degree programs composed strictly of distance courses, some students may never meet their instructors or their fellow students, or visit their college campus until they attend graduation.

Challenges and opportunities in online learning

Online learning becomes especially challenging in some disciplines such as religious studies, communication, liberal arts, and psychology. These disciplines value the role of verbal interaction for facilitating the development of values, critical thinking, communication skills, relationships, and community. Historically, students learned how to act toward one another in an ethical manner or how to view the world through face-to-face interaction with peers and faculty and received immediate feedback. In the online environment, the time lag between posting a message and receiving a response challenges the way students learn meaning and value about people and community. La Rose and Whitten (2000) found that the Internet medium restricts the development of close relationships and a teacher's ability to facilitate affective learning. But the same criticism could be said of textbooks. Discussion gives life to content. Whether the content is provided online or in textbook form, the learning occurs through discussion and application of principles.

The manner in which students communicate during the learning process can be a challenge in the online environment. The emphasis on Christian values and ethical behavior can be difficult for the instructor to address after students send e-mails that are overly blunt, aggressive or inappropriately personal in content. The anonymous nature of computer messages allows senders to play roles with less exposure and to say things that might not be spoken face-to-face. Instructor responses to communication behaviors in the online environment will be no less important than responses to student behaviors in the classroom.

A third challenge in online instruction is the movement from the kind of synergy of ideas and insights that occur in group discussion to individualized learning. Though online education often includes a chat room or forum, the nature of the communication is still primarily one-to-one. Some of the kinds of social and value-oriented learning that occur by virtue of involvement in verbal group discussion may be lost. The key word for many is "immediacy," meaning that students in face-to-face encounters receive immediate response to their questions and behaviors, a component that can be lost in online messaging. Research strongly supports the principle that greater levels of student interaction result in increased learning as reflected by test performance, grading and student satisfaction. Chickering and Ehrmann (1996) state,

> Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out the answers. They must talk about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves." (p. 3)

Online learning must replicate the sense of immediacy, characteristic of interactive classroom based courses that influences the development of relationships and community.

Some scholars believe that the loss of face-to-face interaction can inhibit the development of social skills. For example, Jane Healy (1990), whose primary focus is elementary and secondary schools, states, "Particularly at risk are ability for language-related learning (eg.

Reading, writing, analytic reasoning, and expression), sustained attention, and problem solving" (p. 46). Yet many students may be slow to learn these skills in ground-based courses as well. Both settings still require instructors who can motivate, encourage, and facilitate the learning of these essential skills.

One of the most significant values that can be lost in the online environment is a sense of community. Students communicating online can experience a lack of connection either to the school or to their instructors. Some course designers combat this isolation by broadcasting live views of the school, depicting students in the university's library or gathering in a student union to promote a sense of belonging and community. Courses can provide threaded discussion forums, instant messaging, or pictures of students or instructors that have been scanned in to create connections to other members of their class or to the university. Carnevale (2000a) explains,

> Distance courses shouldn't follow the lecture approach of a traditional course, or just offer students online content to read…The instructor must be able to field questions and engage students and group discussion. You don't transmit knowledge; knowledge is constructed" (p. A46).

Wagner (1997) draws a sharp distinction between "interactivity" and "interaction" in computer-mediated instruction. Interactivity refers to technology systems and point-to-point connections. Interaction involves the exchange and interplay of individuals and groups as they influence each other. Distance education can offer a great deal of interactivity, but the challenge is to translate that activity into interaction. Instructors must design courses in ways that promote maximum interaction to make up for the loss of immediacy that occurs in face-to-face interactions. Roblyer and Ekhaml (2000) created categories for discussing the level of interaction which occurs in online courses:

Few interactive qualities	One-way delivery of information in the form of text and lectures; activities do not require social interaction of students; instructors or students with peers; students interact with students only when required.
Minimum interaction	Two-way delivery of information; e-mail, list serve or bulletin board provides exchange of information; instructor asks for an initial exchange of biographical information; about one-fourth of students will initiate non-required interaction with the instructor.
Moderate interaction	Activities require students to work on projects as pairs or groups; students may exchange information in a chat room; between 25-50 percent of students will initiate non-required interaction with instructor or other students.
Above average interaction	Students required to communicate with both instructor and other students; Students work on projects as pairs or groups and will receive feedback from the other students about project; one-way visual or two-way voice communication allowed between student and instructor or among students; between 50-75 percent of students will initiate non-required interaction with instructor or other students.
High interaction	Instructor provides both online and face-to-face outside-of-class activities to build relationships; students work on projects in pairs or groups and share results with classmates; students may engage in two-way visual, video conferencing, or voice communication; about 75 percent of students will initiate non-required communication with other students in class.

Higher levels of interaction positively affect retention, student satisfaction, and the building of university community. In some cases, online courses may provide more interaction between instructor and students than classroom-based courses.

Because online instruction involves a great deal of one-to-one communication with students, faculty may be involved in hundreds of e-mail messages a week to provide the kind of immediacy expected by many students in online courses. By designing courses where interaction and discussion take place in the forum, faculty may limit the quantity of e-mail correspondence they receive. But just as in classroom instruction, an instructor's response to

student questions or complaints models to a great extent the values of the class and university. Students who feel demeaned by delayed or abrasive instructor e-mails may receive the wrong messages about the university.

Addressing this concern, White (2000) recommends that instructors in online courses create an interpersonal feel by treating students as unique (not as impersonal pixels on a screen), by building choices into course, and by building a positive emotional climate:

- Use student's first names to create a sense of warmth.
- When it is possible, have students scan in pictures of themselves so that classmates can see the person with whom they are interacting.
- Include pictures of students at the bookstore, in the library, in the commons area of campus so that students feel connected to both the course and the campus.

Lanham (1993) argues that online communication promotes greater equality in discussions. "In a classroom based on networked personal computers, the teacher no longer provides the authoritarian focus. Teacher is but one voice online, and other voices too timid to speak in class are often emboldened by the different and more protected role as online conversation provides" (p. 79). Lanham's conclusion should be regarded with caution. In theory, the format does not allow students to talk over or interrupt each other. Power and participation would appear to be more equal than in classroom settings. Merkel (2000) found that equality and equal participation may not actually be as democratic as it would appear. She found that both power and gender differentials occur in online discussions. In addition, differences in status and levels of participation develop the same as in face-to-face learning.

In classroom environments, students often receive immediate clarification about course content. In the online environment, instructor responses to questions about readings or assignments may take several days. Students can be well into a project before they become

aware that they are operating with misunderstandings or false assumptions. This problem makes it important for instructors to carefully organize material before a course begins. Questions and misunderstandings must be anticipated. Hoffman (2001) believes that the advantage is that material can be presented more efficiently and in a more visually interesting manner, "a relief to students who have never found me an inspiring orator" (p. 3). Hoffman argues that students learn the information better because they are able to process and interact with the information. Compared to classroom settings where students hear information once, students in online courses can revisit and review information many times. This requires the students to read material more carefully and pay closer attention to details.

A significant challenge in distance education is screening students who lack sufficient computer skill to successfully participate in online courses. Students may be drawn to online courses because they think they can get by with less work; they believe that skills they learned in one operating system transfer to another; they think that they have sufficient self-discipline to keep up with the deadlines without instructor contact; or, they are told by others that it's a faster way to complete courses. In a study involving 19 online distance courses and 500 students, Osborn (2001) found that about 87 percent of the students completed their courses. The factors associated with at-risk students who did not complete courses included: low motivation to succeed, unstable study environment (family problems, illness, changes at work), and low computer confidence. In addition, undergraduates with low grade point averages or who received less encouragement to take the course did not fare as well.

The implication for colleges who highly value student success and satisfaction is that a great deal of effort must be invested in early assessment of student level computer skills and advising students about realistic expectations for course demands. Universities demonstrate and

model the kind of values they would like students to learn through the responsiveness and support they provide students enrolled in the courses. The value "concern for the whole person" is taught by caring for the student.

The Study

In a Liberal Arts tradition, Jesuit universities emphasize student-centered classes and a curriculum that promotes values such as leadership, concern for social justice, spirituality, development of the whole person, and ethical inquiry and reflection. In classroom-based courses, instructors teach these values primarily through face-to-face activities. With 24 of the 28 U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities offering courses through distance delivery, continuing the principles of value-centered learning and high classroom interaction become challenging.

Regis University, located in Denver, Colorado is one of the Jesuit Universities offering a large distance education program. In the School for Professional Studies, about 1000 undergraduate students register for distance courses each semester. The students are primarily adult, working professionals, 30-50 years of age, who are completing the their junior and senior years of college. Class sizes are capped at 15 students, and instructors must attend assessment and training before they can be "certified" to teach online. Each course is based on a *learning module,* which outlines the course's objectives, establishes learning outcomes, and suggests assignments and activities.

Although the form of delivery differs between distance and classroom courses, the course content and learning outcomes do not. Regis University courses are not unique because of course content. Regis distinguishes itself by emphasizing "core values" which are strategically designed into course content. Donahue (1992) summarizes a few of the principles that characterize a Jesuit education and that serve as the core values for course development:

- belief that God is present in all things and that all relationships are imbued with a sense of meaning and purpose;
- recognition that God intends Christians to be responsible as a community;
- priority of the interior life or the inner journey of faith;
- commitment to serve a life in the service of others in doing God's will;
- belief that there is an integral relationship between faith and reason;
- education of students to be leaders; and
- development of knowledge in order to make choices that promote human and spiritual growth in the future.

Based on these core principles, we set out to measure the success of Regis' online courses in meeting learning outcomes. The first phase of the study evaluated 102 student evaluations drawn from 24 distance courses in business. After the drop/add date, 90% of the students typically complete their distance courses. More than 95 percent of the students completing the course stated "satisfaction" with their learning; 95 percent stated that they were satisfied with the interaction with other students; and about 90 percent stated that they received timely feedback from their instructors.

To understand whether student satisfaction in Regis courses included the values priority of the university, the second phase of the study involved analysis of 364 student evaluation forms, involving 118 distance courses taught during spring and fall semesters, 2001. Means were chosen as the units of analysis because they provide the best indicators of the combined performance of the groups. Means answered the question, "Do the students believe that we are achieving our goals of value-centered learning?" The values assessed by students include commitment to leadership and service to others, ethical and social responsibility, knowledge

about diverse cultures, effective communication, problem solving and analytical skills, and critical thinking.

The third part of the study surveyed 28 Regis instructors from the above courses to evaluate the level of success they believed the distance courses achieved.

The survey asked 12 questions, which included:

- How do we ensure course quality in the online format?
- What methods should be used to build relationships in the online courses?
- What are a couple of our biggest challenges to deliver high-quality, value-centered, online courses in a Jesuit context?
- Is there a difference in the development of content and its delivery for an online course compared to a classroom-based course?
- How do we ensure that online courses provide equivalent quality to classroom-based courses?

Results

Students not only gave high marks to distance-delivery as a medium of instruction, they gave high marks to the course for achieving many of the Jesuit values. On the basis of a 4-point scale (4 = strongly agree, 3= agree, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree), Table 1 summarizes the mean scores for online courses in business and humanities.

Table 1
Mean scores of student evaluations for 118 distance course

The course increased my…	Business*	Humanities**	All Students***
ability to think critically	3.2	3.1	3.2
commitment to leadership and service to others	3.1	3.0	3.1
ability to communicate effectively	3.0	3.1	3.0
analytical and problem solving skills	3.1	3.0	3.1
ethical and social responsibility	2.9	3.1	3.0
knowledge about diverse cultures	2.4	3.1	2.7
	* n = 238	** n = 126	*** n = 364

Business = Business, Accounting, Economics, Computer Information Systems, mathematics
Humanities = Communication, English, Psychology, Education

The student surveys suggest that values can be taught online to the satisfaction of the students. The means for five of the six values for the business and humanities courses combined are over 3.0. The lower average for "knowledge about diverse cultures" in business courses suggests that learning about diversity may require more strategic use of case studies and student interaction, especially in higher cognitive courses, such as accounting, economics, or computer science. Though only about 25% of online students returned their course evaluations, we believe that the continued popularity of the courses tells us that the courses are accomplishing the intended outcomes to the satisfaction of the students.

When we asked students why they took the courses through distance delivery, we received a variety of responses. Forty percent stated that they experienced conflicts in scheduling classroom courses or that the class they wanted was not offered. Twenty percent said that business and travel commitments prevented them from taking courses on campus. Fifteen percent believed that the courses would be less difficult or involve less work. In terms of time devoted to class, about 75 % of the students said that they averaged 13-17 hours per week on each of their distance courses.

We were interested in how well the distance courses accomplished the task of teaching values compared to classroom-based courses. Table 2 lists the means based on 841 student evaluations from 73 classroom-based courses.

Overall, the distance courses compare favorably with classroom-based courses in terms of value outcomes in every category except knowledge about diverse cultures. In a few categories, such as critical thinking and commitment to leadership, students even rated the distance format a little higher for achieving the outcomes. In the humanities courses, students rated achievement of the value outcomes just a bit higher in all categories in comparison to

online. The opposite was true in business courses. With the exception of the diversity value, students rated all distance courses equal to or higher for achieving the outcomes.

Table 2
Mean scores of Student Evaluations from 73 Classroom-based Courses

The course increased my…	Business*	Humanities**	All Students***
ability to think critically	3.0	3.2	3.1
commitment to leadership and service to others	2.9	3.0	3.0
ability to communicate effectively	3.1	3.2	3.2
analytical and problem solving skills	3.1	3.2	3.2
ethical and social responsibility	2.9	3.1	3.0
knowledge about diverse cultures	2.9	3.3	3.1
	* n = 448	**n = 393	***n = 841

Business = Business, Accounting, Economics, Computer Information Systems, mathematics
Humanities = Communication, English, Psychology, Education, Sociology, Philosophy

The second part of the study asked 28 distance-delivery instructors to assess the quality of their distance courses and how they integrated the Jesuit values into their coursework. Table 3 lists the factors the instructors believed to be most important in order to deliver successful distance courses.

Table 3
Factors Rated Most Important by Instructors

Instructors possess strong communication and organization skills
Strategically design courses
Monitor quality
Use activities that promote value learning

Communication skills

Most instructors found that teaching online requires a different communication style than classroom instruction. Not only are the instructor's written communication skills challenged as a

facilitator of online instruction, but also their organizational skills and attention to detail. White (2000) points out that online instructors set the tone for a course, establish expectations which influence performance, and convey meaning about what is important. Students model the instructor's communication style.

Feedback, as a critical component of online learning, can be difficult to provide in a format that is primarily written. E-mail messages lack the kind of intonation that students are accustomed to in face-to-face interaction. Words can be misunderstood or interpreted out of context. Messages can be interpreted as attacking or too critical. Instructors need to devise feedback that chooses words carefully and that respects the student's dignity. They may need to rewrite a message several times before getting it right and clicking the send button. Business instructor Sue O'Donnell states, "Teaching online is harder because you must do the communicating through words only. This means you must be intuitive about where the students are and you must always be kind, considerate and "soft" in your wording."

In working a mode that is primarily written communication, the delivery of course content poses challenges. The instructor lacks the nonverbal cues that tell how a student is managing the coursework. Weeks may pass before an instructor becomes aware that a student lacks sufficient academic preparation or computer skill to be successful in a course. In addition, instructors lack the face-to-face warm-up familiar in classroom environments that promotes interest in a courses subject matter or bonding with other students. One instructor commented, "Online teaching relies heavily on written form of communication, as opposed to verbal and nonverbal forms. It also challenges the teacher to promote a sense of community with a group of individuals who are far-flung and perhaps haven't even much in common other than the course

they are in." Warm-up activities that promote interaction and interest in course content must be built into distance courses, just like they are built into classroom courses.

Because written communication is the mode for online discussion, it is imperative to establish ground rules and expectations from the very start of class. Communication must be clear and direct. Facilitators need to create clear criteria for grading communication and correspondence from the students and set parameters for this grading. Some facilitators suggest that certain areas are "spelling error free" zones. Students interacting in a chatroom, for example, are not held accountable for spelling/grammar, but participation. Though primarily a forum for student discussion, the chatroom may involve occasional review by the instructor. Chatrooms require that students are respectful and follow the guidelines of classroom etiquette regardless of the mode of communication (not discriminatory, obscene, etc).

There is little doubt that constructive timely feedback contributes a great deal to student success. The timing of feedback in distance courses lacks the spontaneity and explanation that often occur in the classroom. Sitting at their computers, students may ask questions at 10 pm and not receive a response for several days. The delay may contribute to frustration, low motivation, and commitment to complete an assignment. Instructors must learn how to "read" student silences and how to promote involvement. Most instructors believe that about 24 hours is the longest a message should go unanswered. Students lose interest as the time grows longer. Business instructor Chuck Bowles states, "You must overcome the lack of personal contact through constant e-mail communication in a timely fashion."

Strategically design courses

Development of online courses takes much more time than the traditional classroom development. Many instructors, as well as instructional designers, require 6-9 months in order to

adequately design a course. Psychology instructor Johanna Gallers explains, "The difference between online and classroom courses has to do with the amount of interactive media necessary for presenting content. By necessity, online instructors have to plan more activities to create interaction, since in class, the instructor can show videos, list on the board, and conduct impromptu discussions."

Online instructors recommend that assignments should be frequent and short in order to maintain the attention and involvement of students. However, discussion in the forum should involve long and thought provoking questions and require students to integrate readings, theory, and the student's experience. Threaded discussions promote thinking about the course content as well as promoting student interaction.

Creating expectations equal to classroom-based courses requires instructors to be clear about deadlines. CIS instructor Joe Danecki explains, "This is difficult because the online student often thinks that he or she can go online without deference to the course's deadlines. Because many students do not have to personally see or talk to their instructors, they feel more comfortable asking for extensions or just ignoring deadlines." Many students are not aware that a distance course is not necessarily self-paced. Students must attend class online, participate in discussions, and submit on time along with the other students.

Because the online course is relatively fixed once it is created, the sequence of learning must be well planned, anticipating student needs and questions. The whiteboard diagrams, course materials, and learning activities must account for the needs of both fast and slow learners. Expectations should be clear and specific. English instructor Rob Truscott recommends, "Quantify when and how often students should be required to be online each week." In addition, Carnevale (2000a) advises course designers to be strategic about aesthetics

of web pages. Pages should be heavy with graphics, special themes, and sound files to spice up pages. In addition, to make participation interesting, designers include plays on words and cartoons to get and hold the attention of students. The challenge is creating multimedia files small enough to accommodate a 56K modem connection.

Online courses should be developed and tested by a pilot group prior to going "live." The pace of information and activities, graphics, and internet links are tested to determine where problems may occur in course delivery. In addition, if exams are used in the online course, both administration (in the set-up) and faculty should be reviewing the exam, and checking the answer key prior to the posting to ensure there are no errors in the answer keys. Pilot testing a course is an extra step, but an essential one. Navigation within the course module needs to be smooth and user friendly.

Activities and discussions should strategically address target values desired in the course outcomes. This requires course instructors to have a detailed knowledge of the core philosophies in order to pose questions, create activities, and move discussion to the values-centered context. Courses need to include activities that extend course content to ways in which the content can be used in an ethical manner, in the service of others, or in a way that demonstrates leadership. Virtual simulations need to accomplish the tasks that face-to-face exercises accomplish in the classroom environment.

Monitor quality

Regis instructors believe that the educational experience of online courses should be equal to the classroom courses. The courses should include equal quality and level of difficulty. The online course needs to be an "extension of" the classroom-based course, not "instead of" the classroom. Expectations should be similar for both learning formats. Communication instructor

Jim Bolick observes, "It's obvious that some students expect that online assignments can be written in the informal style of e-mail rather than the more demanding college-level writing format. The standards should be the same."

The content and modules need to be periodically reviewed by a faculty team and modified to fit changing needs of instructors or the academic department. Regis reviews one-third of all of its courses each year. Reviewing and revising online courses can be time consuming and expensive, but maintaining quality requires strategic review of each course.

Many Regis instructors believe that one way to maintain consistency and quality in online courses is to require instructors who want to teach an online course to first teach the course in the classroom. Liberal Arts chair Karen Grossaint explains, "In the classroom environment, the values often fall into place due to the environment. This may not occur in the online class. Online courses require more deliberate planning. Instructors must create the activities or experiences that promote reflection and insights."

In addition to the normal academic credentials and experience required of online instructors, online instructors attend a technology assessment to determine their level of comfort with online technology. Each potential instructor provides an essay reflecting upon the Jesuit values and how the values influence their teaching philosophy. First-time online instructors are required to do an internship under the guidance of a seasoned faculty member. Communication instructor Janet Colvin states, "First-time online instructors should be mentored by an effective online instructor. My mentor from four years ago created a partnership with me where I could bounce ideas off him for improving my courses."

Potential new online instructors, just like first-time online students, need to be advised that online courses are time consuming and require daily involvement. Many instructors

commented, "Online teaching usually requires at least as much, or more, time than classroom teaching, a factor that I believe many prospective online facilitators underestimate."

Because many online instructors deliver their courses from locations other than the school, the instructors may not feel a part of the university faculty. The Regis online instructors believe a priority should be creating ways to include online instructors in the faculty community. Some ways to support faculty include online faculty newsletters to provide current updates regarding administrative policies, cyber meetings which involve faculty in the decision-making, and online discussions to share resources or resolve curricular problems.

Activities that promote value learning

Incorporating and teaching values is a central part of both online and distance education at Regis. Instructors openly and enthusiastically share the creative ways they facilitate value learning. In one history class, about Europe since 1914, each student is assigned a country. Each week the student provides a background for the rest of the students about the events taking place in the country at this point in history, what the nation values, and its activities in world affairs. In addition, students evaluate in a forum discussion whether they agree with what their country is doing. The final paper asks students to discuss the value set of another country and about how it may affect different choices than those people in the United States might make.

In a religion course, an instructor went out into the community and interviewed people from different faith groups, asking them to talk about their faith experience. The interviews were videotaped. They will be used as sources for reflection papers in both the online and classroom-based courses. The instructor reasoned that hearing people talk about their experiences will generate more reflection in students than "talking head" videos that focus solely on religious principles.

With a similar emphasis, students in another history course are asked to interview someone who lived in a specific historical period, such as The Great Depression, World War II, Vietnam War, Korean War, the 50's or the 60's. Interviewees are asked to tell about their experience during the time period and explain how it influenced their current view of the world. Students share the results of their interviews with other students of their online class. This becomes the substance for discussion and further value questions by the instructor.

In the business capstone course, online students are encouraged to engage in a service project that will benefit the community. Some have worked with Denver shelters, translating documents from English into Spanish to help the people who stay there. Some have mobilized volunteers in schools to help children improve test scores. Students bring back from their experiences a better understanding of values that can be shared in reflection papers and through forum discussions.

Business instructor Don Schierling explains that he uses a Socratic approach in his distance courses. He asks students questions to expose conflict between their personal values and the corporate values they encounter. He says, "Values learning is more than one assignment. It's a process with which the instructor approaches a class. The instructor lets the students know that he or she is serious about value issues in the course content."

In a critical thinking course, the online instructor asks value questions that attempt to integrate theory and practice. For example:

> It has been said that the main focus of our economic systems is to convince us that we are not happy and to sell us something that will alleviate unhappiness. Are we truly unhappy? Respond thoughtfully to the contributions of your classmates.

> Consider "lens of experience," background beliefs, and how men and women often use the same words in different ways. Do you think that these make men and women's critical thinking skills are different? Identify how we might

> improve our critical thinking skills by utilizing the skills common to the opposite gender. Respond thoughtfully to the contributions of your classmates.

Carnevale (2000b) describes how one online instructor at Shawnee Community College promotes problem solving and critical thinking in her course by asking students to participate in Web scavenger hunts or to solve mysteries. Another instructor asks students to use their imaginations to write a page and one-half essay describing a toothpick. The goal is to engage students and encourage them to become more creative.

Instructors cite many challenges to teaching values in the online environment. Business instructor Dick Doolittle says, "It's challenging to get the students to think about how we ought to live without being preachy. It's sometimes difficult to get students to reflect about their lives." Another challenge is getting students to think beyond the course content. One instructor explains, "Many students are too focused on the specific course content and fail to consider the value of relationships and how situations may affect others. The class value questions must help them to focus beyond themselves."

Conclusion

The results of both student evaluations and faculty surveys suggest that online courses can achieve many of the learning outcomes expected in classroom-based courses. Comparing the overall means, three of the six values utilized in the study achieved equal or higher levels of satisfaction in the online environment, with twos value very close to equal. Students rated only one value, appreciation of diverse cultures, significantly lower in online courses.

Instructors identified several factors, which they believe contribute to the delivery of high-quality online courses including, strong communication skills, commitment to value learning, and strategic design of courses to include activities that promote discussion of values.

Faculty must make it clear to students that questions which deal with how we ought to live or about what we value are important components of the class.

Because online courses involve a great deal of self-discipline, instructors need to emphasize to students the importance of class deadlines. Instructors can maximize involvement by using many short assignments and communicating frequently with students in the online forum. They may model the kinds of values that they would like students to learn, much the same as in the classroom environment. Students learn both course content and how the content connects to the student's life experience.

Online courses are not a phenomenon or fad that will disappear in a short time. It will be a learning format used by a large number of students for many years to come, much like videos and overhead transparencies became learning tools during the past few decades. Online courses and web-based instruction will continue to be popular in the future. In order to provide programs that match student learning styles and adult needs, Christian universities will have to enter this learning dimension and develop courses that include values which we believe are important in Liberal Arts and Christian education.

Universities will need to recruit faculty who share the university's values, support them with technological training, and provide development training as technology changes. Because budgets in small universities are tight, educational alliances among Christian universities can provide technological support for developing and delivering the online courses. For example, Regis University participates in JesuitNET, a consortium of 25 Jesuit colleges that shares information and collaborates in program development and delivery (http://www.Jesuit.NET). Christian universities have a great deal to offer students in the distance community, including the

teaching of values which we believe will make a great deal of difference in their personal and professional lives and in the community in which they live.

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Organization/Address: Regis University School for Professional Studies 3333 Regis Blvd, L-12 Denver, CO 80221	Telephone: 303-458-4963	Fax: 303-964-5539
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